

An Interview With
Suzanne Dycus And M. Gendreau Of

Crawling With Tarts



G.T.: Who is Crawling With Tarts?

M & S: Paris by night (ref Brassai)

G.T.: When did you begin working together as a musical/artistic group? Where?

M: April 1983; Ventura/Oxnard (CA) area artistic/photographic/literary collaboration and collaboration as members of a musical group (other than CWT). Founded a magazine ASP-Youths Go Camping which continues for two years. Crawling With Tarts forms December 1983.

S: Then we leave everything, all responsibilities, and drive into the jungles of Mexico.

G.T.: Do you perform live? Where? Describe your performances.

M: Yes, we occasionally perform live, mostly at radio stations, a few public. There have been several kinds: very organized shows where we play songs off of a song list, Improvised sets (usually on the radio) which often have a theme for cohesiveness, and a mixture of the two such as Boots (recent cassette) which is organized bits connected with improvisatory sections.

G.T.: How many cassettes have you released? Describe them in your own terms, according to meaning, concept, success...

S: 10. All of our cassettes are autobiographical pieces; they span all of the years we've been together

M: Like volumes of a diary.

S: Everytime we move to a new house...

M: ...environment...

S: ...we get a new feeling.

M: Set of inspirations, new material.

S: A new point of reference. House Spirit (a song from Tearoom) describes the residue of people and emotion and all forms of life expressed in that room. We try to extract that.

M: The spirit also comes from the city or country that the environment is in.

S: All environments have themes, i.e., Wood Themes, Farm and Rural Themes, City Themes, Ocean Themes,





etc. Each is individual and comes with a whole set of symbols. The packaging of each cassette is important, a visual braille. It must also carry something, like a shrine unwrapping; a gift from us.

CWT and Bombast From The Hut

S: Since these were our first tapes, they convey our first adventure and love. We drove to Mexico during Christmas time (very colorful and festive). We were in a very socialistic time in our lives: very tired and bitter about materialism in America, very much in love with basic beauty and the aesthetic that elemental cultures create. We treasured small pieces of paper we found on the ground with Mexican typeset. We lived in the villages near Escuinapa, Sinaloa; at night there would be whole families out in the plaza: celebration into the wee hours of morning. So we came back to America and used all that we experienced; we made stories of our lives.

Tearoom

M: Made in Los Angeles, 1984.

S: This is our first urban life.

M & S: Los Angeles is hanging gardens and heat and bee-like activity; these things are reflected in

Tearoom.

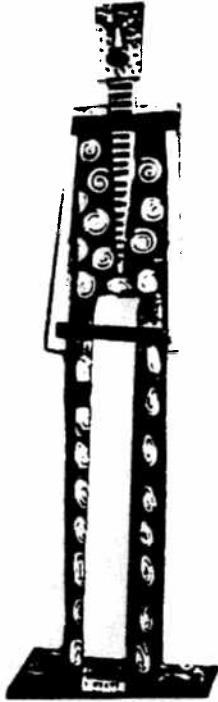
M: There is something of the city that produced a hushed mood on the cassette. Los Angeles was also a place of much collaboration and interaction; sometimes to great distraction to two isolationists.

S: Then we decided to go back to Mexico; go to colonial Mexico, and to the Aztec and Mayan ruins. So we drove once again. Central Mexico is very Spanish: old tradition, very beautiful. A lot more historical than the beach life of the mainland coast which is more banana plantations and huts.

Loneliness

S: Upon returning from The Second Mexico Adventure we moved to Northern California, Felton, where we lived in a cabin. It was a very hard adjustment for us. The woods were unfriendly, the people unfriendly. The bad wood themes are expressed in songs like "True Apache Valentine" and "Putting Orange in the Torso." That year we lost Cuba. We made wooden icons. We were being harassed by renegade sixteen-year-old boys who hated us for being individuals. Every morning airplanes would fly over our cabin and drop larvae on the forest to kill the gypsy moth. our garden died, our VW engine blew up. Then we received a very large gift unexpected, light, and we knew the best thing to do was to leave this sour existence and head towards an adventure.





of expression.

G.T.: You've been releasing and trading tapes and stuff for a while now. How has the tape network/underground changed or grown or shriveled up over this period? Describe some of your best and worst experiences. What is the state of the underground?

M: It has grown considerably in the years that we have known about it. One result seems to be great diffusion without a directly proportional diversification. Its state appears to me to be that of a large, disorganised creature with unclear boundaries which requires constant feeding of its hundred mouths in order to get a clear, useful message from it. I must say it eludes me. I'm still experimenting with it; I don't know what it is yet. However we prefer to do other things and don't spend a lot of time networking (probably the reason for my confusion.)

Instead we have a few people with whom we try to have a less-superficial relationship.

S: So that our best experiences with it are friends we have made all over the world.

G.T.: Why do you keep it up? What are the rewards? Where is it all leading?

M & S: For us, this question has no answer.

G.T.: Do you fear death?

S: On Loneliness, in Felton, was my most profound confrontation with death. It occupied my thoughts all of the time. I created Icons (painted wooden statuettes) as protectors because then I felt threatened and oppressed (cruel employers, verbal harassment from local ignorant people); in the panic zone. I was afraid to adventure for fear of being killed. You can't adventure if you are afraid to die at every moment. Then we went to Europe; in the plane, I realised it was my ego that gave the fear of being squashed because I was bartering with the engine. I realised I was nothing, having no control. Before I thought I could control life and I realised that that is egotistical. Now, I am not afraid of death.

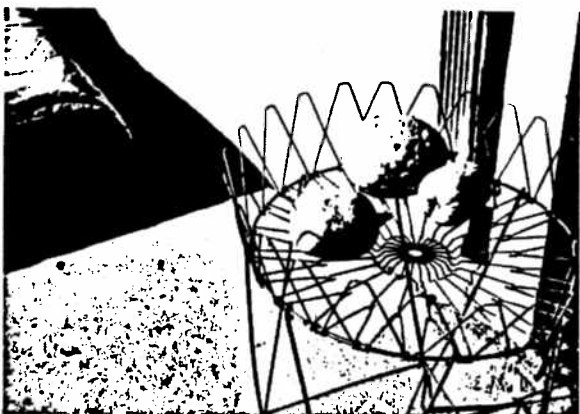
G.T.: What Ideals, ideas, and themes come out in your work?

S: History. Nature. Studying and watching all forms, whether people or bees.

M: Often several ideals are superimposed until one set of correct effect is found.

S: Sometimes I use extremely simple themes like the gathering of food; I really like this. Growing food is even more interesting of a process. From seed





to flower to food to me, and back to the ground: A transformation theme all living, all dieing at the same time. And Complex Variety. Every bird is different. Climate, language, dress, to culture identity. Landscape, history, making, remaking. Living all of the time.

G.T.: What do you think of the roles of the following in art: political ideas, nudity, humor, revolution, shock, stupidity, money, love?

S: All of these things have a part because they are a part of life. And there is no differentiation between what is art and what is life.

M: We don't express any of these things as an ideal, although we might use one or part of one when necessary. So they have a material role.

G.T.: Have you ever sought the attention of a record label? Would you ever? Or are you at all interested in recording on vinyl?

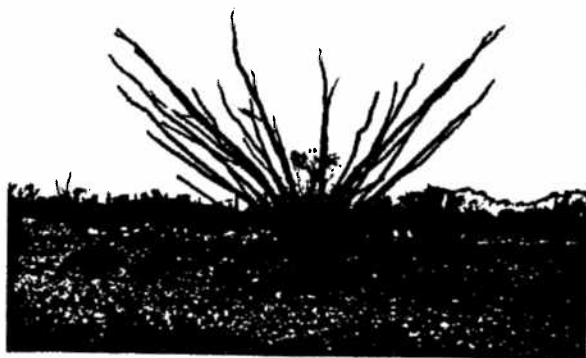
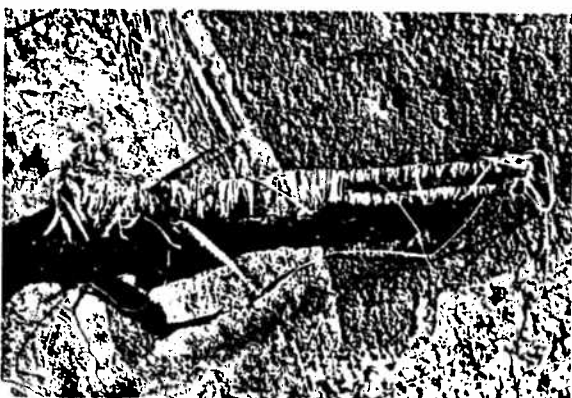
M: We are making a record now with Kim Cascone os Silent Records. We hadn't been seeking attention actively; someone played some of our music for him and he was interested. We got together and agreed on a project. We thought working in a studio would be enormously difficult, but it has turned out not to be so. We hope to do other such projects.

G.T.: How do you define beauty?

M & S: Truth; the power of nature.

G.T.: Do you believe the human race is killing itself?

S: No, just existing as always. It's a constant cycle, completely evolving: 1000 die, 1000 born. In nature if a forest is burned, a new forest will grow. This is life; it is a constant balance of creating and destroying. And at the core we are very primal and unwilling to accept knowledge and ourselves for what we are. We always want more and expect the ultimate. Sometimes I find myself distinguishing a sorts of things, ordinary things: fences, houses, humans. I'm trying to understand life by what residue it leaves: Tools, ethics, architecture. Although I seem to be constantly wishing people would not just settle for mundane lives so far embedded in material things. An imbalance takes place and survival instincts vanish and people become so dependent on comfort that they would forget about life altogether. Nature would be ignored and soon: a world within a world. This I thought about when I was in an





isolated desert campground in New Mexico standing in line to brush my teeth as four girls manicured themselves with blowhairdryers, curling irons, jell, and makeup. What for? We were in the middle of Nowhere and it seemed ridiculous.

G.T.: You move around a lot. Are you on the run?

M: We are not on the run. We are explorers.

G.T.: Are you married? How does your relationship interfere or contribute to your collaboration?

M: No, we are not married legally. We spend all of our time together. We do our creative work together.

G.T.: What are the benefits of collaborating as opposed to working alone?

M: We can pass ideas back and forth to refine them.

S: And each fills in the gaps where the other may be lacking.

M: If we have different ideas about a song, say different melodies, we can usually combine them to come out with something greater than the parts: a gestalt. (exempli gratia: Passing A Dreaded Point, compilation this issue.)

G.T.: What is sanity?

S: Who can say?



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